

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6780

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN, CARR, BL

SUBJECT: TREATMENT OF AMERICANS IN FOREIGN JAILS

REF: STATE 184194

1. LA PAZ CONSULAR DISTRICT PRESENTLY HAS 41 AMERICANS DETAINED IN PRISONS, ALL ON NARCOTICS CHARGES. ONE CONSUL AND A VICE-CONSUL ARE ASSIGNED TO THE CONSULAR SECTION OF THE EMBASSY. A VICE-CONSUL FROM ANOTHER POST HAS TEMPORARILY BEEN ASSIGNED HERE TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ASSISTNACE. THERE IS A CONSULAR AGENT IN SANTA CRUZ, WHERE SEVEN OF THE 41 AMERICANS ARE DETAINED AND NO CONSULAR REPRESENTATIVE IN COCHABAMBA, APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES FLYING TIME FROM LA PAZ, WHERE FOUR AMERICANS ARE DETAINED. IT IS OFTEN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO RESERVE SPACE ON THE PLANE TO COCHABAMBA AT SHORT NOTICE.

2. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, THE EMBASSY HAS FOUND THAT TWO CONSULAR OFFICERS ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO MEET REQUIREMENTS DICTATED BY THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS DETAINED HERE. THE SITUATION WOULD BE EVEN MORE GRAVE IF THE CONSULAR AGENT IN SANTA CRUZ WERE UNWILLING TO WORK THE MANY ADDITIONAL HOURS PER DAY FOR WHICH SHE IS NOT PAID (UNDER PRESENT REGULATIONS SHE IS PAID ONLY FOR 2 HOURS PER DAY); IF TWO

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MEMBERS OF THE U.S. MILITARY MISSION WERE NOT LOCATED IN COCHABAMBA, AND IF MISSION WERE NOT STAFFED WITH PERSONNEL WILLING TO ASSIST IN AMERICAN PRISONER PROBLEMS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MILITARY MISSION PERSONNEL WILL BE REMOVED AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER. PRESENTLY ONE VICE-CONSUL AND THE ACTING CONSUL SPEND THEIR FULL TIME ON AMERICAN

PRISONER ISSUES WHILE THE TDY VICE CONSUL HANDLES VISA AND U.S. CITIZEN MATTERS. THE CHARGE' ALSO SPENDS AT LEAST 30 PER CENT OF THIS TIME ON THE PRISONER PROBLEM.

3. CONSULAR OFFICERS ARE REQUIRED TO VISIT THE PRISONERS IN LA PAZ AT LEAST ONCE WEEKLY AND THE PRISONERS IN THE OTHER TWO CITIES ARE VISITED AS OFTEN BY EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES. HEARING IN LA PAZ ARE ATTEDED BY A CONSULAR OFFICER AND ONE OF TWO LEGAL ADVISERS HIRED BY THE EMBASSY TO INSURE THAT THE RIGHTS OF AMERICANS DETAINED HERE ARE RESPECTED UNDER BOLIVIAN LAW AND ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS. FURTHERMORE, THE EMBASSY, WHEN NECESSARY, PAY FOR INTERPRETERS WHO ATTEND HEARINGS TO ASSIST IMPRISONED AMERICANS. WHEN HEARING SCHEDULES CONFLICT, WHETHER IN LA PAZ ITSELF OR IN LA PAZ AND ANOTHER CITY, THE CONSULAR SECTION CANNOT MEET THE NEEDS OF THE AMERICAN DETAINEES, ESPECIALLY WITH ITS REGULAR TWO-PERSON STAFF.

4. BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED PAPER FLOW, MUCH OF WHICH IS CLASSIFIED, THE CONSULAR SECTION FINDS IT DIFFICULT AND TIME CONSUMING TO DRAFT, FILE, AND TYPE CABLES, LETTERS AND OTHER MESSAGES. AS THE CONSULAR SECTION IS SEPARATED PHYSICALLY FROM THE EMBASSY CLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED

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CABLES, MEMOS, ETC., HAVE TO BE CARRIED TO THE EMBASSY BY AN AMERICAN OFFICER FOR TYPING AND PROCESSING.

5. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING STAFFING MINIMUM TO MEET THE NEEDS FOR THE DETAINED AMERICANS: ONE CONSUL FLUENT IN SPANISH; TWO VICE-CONSULS ALSO FLUENT IN SPANISH; TWO LOCAL SECRETARIES (ONE ADDITIONAL); THREE OTHER LOCAL EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBLE FOR VISAS AND U.S. CITIZENSHIP PROBLEMS OTHER THAN PRISONERS; PERMANENT FINANCING FOR EMBASSY LEGAL ADVISERS ASSIGNED TO MONITOR LOCAL ATTORNEYS; FUNDS FOR INTERPRETERS; UPGRADING OF THE CONSULAR AGENT'S POSITION IN SANTA CRUZ TO PERMIT HER TO BE PAID FOR UP TO A THIRTY HOUR WEEK; ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSULAR AGENT POSITION IN COCHABAMBA AT A GRADE SUFFICIENT TO FINANCE A FIFTEEN HOUR WEEK.
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